

the bully

Bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Some are big; some are small; some bright and some not so bright; some attractive and some not so attractive; some popular and some disliked by almost everybody.

Bullying is a conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity, intended to harm.

The Four Markers of Bullying

1. An imbalance of power
2. Intent to harm
3. Threat of further aggression
4. When bullying escalates unabated—terror

Bullying is not about anger, or even about conflict. It's about contempt—a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone considered to be worthless, inferior or undeserving of respect. Contempt comes with three apparent psychological advantages that allow kids to harm others without feeling empathy, compassion or shame. These are:

1. A sense of entitlement—the right to control, dominate, subjugate, and abuse another human being
2. An intolerance toward difference
3. A liberty to exclude—to bar, isolate, and segregate a person deemed not worthy of respect or care

Seven Steps to Stop Bullying

1. Discipline (including the three Rs: restitution, resolution, reconciliation)
2. Create opportunities to “do good”
3. Nurture empathy
4. Teach friendship skills
5. Closely monitor TV viewing, video games and computer activities
6. Engage in more constructive, entertaining, energizing activities
7. Teach ways to “will good”

the bullied

The one thing that all kids who are bullied have in common is that a bully or a bunch of bullies has targeted them. Each one was singled out to be the object of scorn, and thus the recipient of bullying, merely because he or she was different in some way.

The Warning Signs

1. Shows an abrupt lack of interest in school, or refuses to go to school
2. Takes an unusual route to school
3. Suffers drop in grades
4. Withdraws from family and school activities
5. Is hungry after school
6. Steals money from home
7. Makes a beeline to the bathroom when arriving home
8. Is sad, sullen, angry, or scared after receiving a phone call or email
9. Does something out of character
10. Has torn or missing clothing
11. Uses derogatory or demeaning language when talking about peers
12. Stops talking about peers and everyday activities
13. Has physical injuries not consistent with explanation
14. Has stomachaches, headaches, panic attacks, is unable to sleep, sleeps too much, is exhausted
15. Plays alone, or prefers to hang with adults

Why Kids Don't Tell

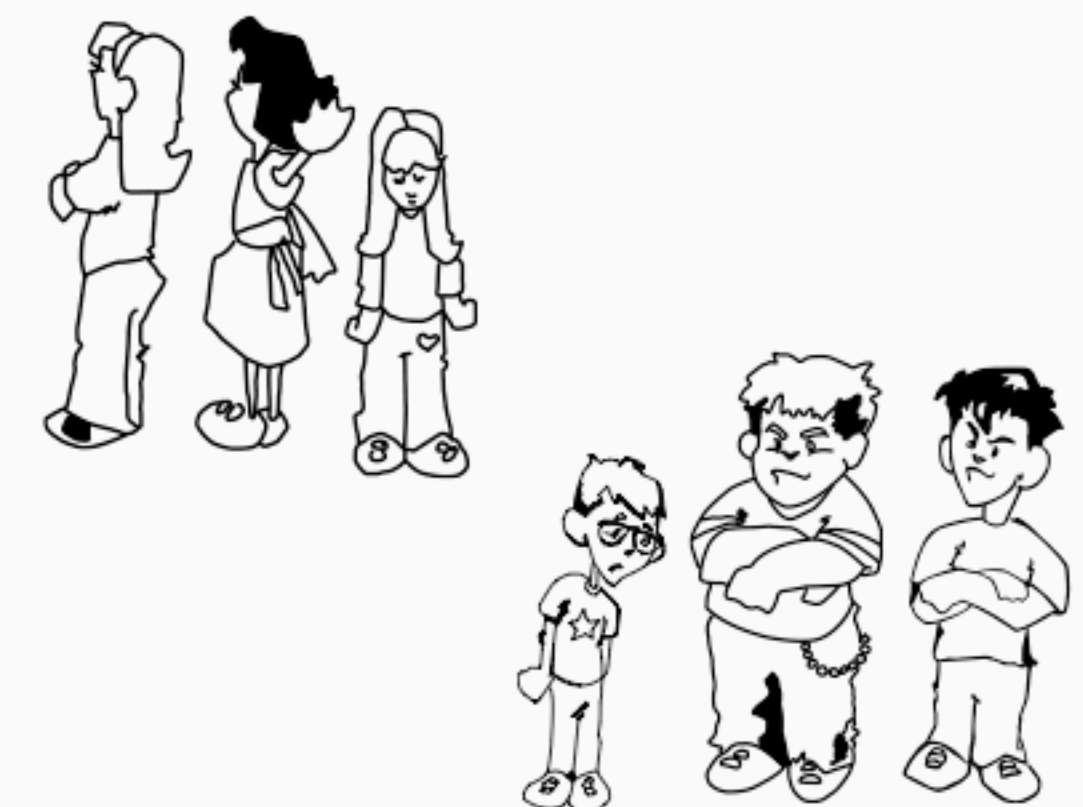
1. They are ashamed of being bullied
2. They are afraid of retaliation
3. They don't think anyone can help them
4. They don't think anyone will help them
5. They've bought into the lie that bullying is a necessary part of growing up
6. They might believe that adults are part of the lie—they bully too
7. They have learned that “ratting” on a peer is bad, not cool

the bystander

Bystanders are the third group of players in this tragedy. They are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully, through acts of omission and commission. They stand idly by or look away, or they can actively encourage the bully or join in and become one of a bunch of bullies. Injustice overlooked or ignored becomes a contagion that infects even those who thought they could turn away.

Standing Up and Speaking Out

Bullying is challenged when the majority stands up against the cruel acts of the minority. Establishing new norms, enforcing playground rules, and increasing supervision are policy decisions that can help reduce the incidents of bullying. Since much of the bullying goes on “under the radar of adults,” a potent force is kids themselves showing bullies that they will not be looked up to, nor will their cruel behavior be condoned or tolerated. Kids need not be bystanders. They can become active witnesses, standing up for their peers, speaking out against injustices, and taking responsibility for what happened among themselves.



Illustrations by Joey Coloroso © 2002

Excerpts from *the bully, the bullied, and the bystander*, Barbara Coloroso © 2002
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